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Reagan choice for CIA drops out

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WASHINGTON —

President Reagan's embattled nominee for CIA director yesterday withdrew from consideration for the job.

Robert Gates submitted his withdrawal to new White House chief of staff Howard Baker, who then read

it and a response from Reagan at a mid-afternoon press conference.

Gates is the latest in the growing list of Irancon casualties.

Baker called finding a new nominee for the nation's top intelligence job an "urgent item" on Reagan's agenda.

Sources said bitter feuding over a new nominee already has erupted within the administration.

Brent Scowcroft, Reagan's staunchest defender on the Tower Commission, was considered a top candidate until Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Sec-

retary of State George Shultz protested.

Weinberger and Shultz are furious that the Commission criticized them for not doing enough to prevent the Iranian arms sales.

Now at the top of the list to succeed Casey are U.S. Ambassador to the UN Vernon Wal-

ters and Gen. William Odom, head of the supersecret National Security Agency.

Also on the list is Bobby Inman, a deputy under former CIA director William Casey, but Inman, who also served under President Carter, is considered too liberal by some within the administration.

Gates has been acting CIA director since Casey was felled in December by brain cancer.

Reagan praised Gates and said he would remain acting CIA director until a replacement is found and would then return to being deputy director.